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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
COLLEGE RESEARCH AND ALBERTA'S PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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RAYMOND MAGNUS OLSON

A THESIS

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A very faint, blurry background image of a person wearing a long, light-colored robe or dress, possibly traditional in style, standing in a landscape with trees and a building in the distance.

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research,
for acceptance, a thesis entitled "College Research and
Alberta's Public Community Colleges" submitted by Raymond
Magnus Olson in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Education.



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop a profile or description of the research component in Alberta's public community colleges. For the purposes of this study the research component was sub-divided into two major areas, institutional research and content research.

Data for the study were collected using the semi-structured interview technique. A total of thirty respondents were used in this study, ten from each of three colleges. The colleges were chosen in such a way as to include different program emphases: (1) career program emphasis; (b) transfer program emphasis; and (c) a balanced career-transfer program emphasis.

A majority of the respondents felt that extensive institutional research was not being done in the community colleges. A greater need for this type of problem-solving research was seen. It was also felt by a majority of the respondents that an office of institutional research for each college was not required. Respondents in College A were seventy percent against, and College C respondents were sixty percent against, the establishment of such an office; College B respondents were eighty percent in favor of such an office. It was generally felt that this function would be met by having a staff member in each

college given the responsibility of coordinating research activities on a part-time basis or by having a provincial office of institutional research which the colleges could utilize.

The amount of content research being conducted in the colleges was minimal. A majority of the respondents supported the idea of having more content research in the community colleges.

More instructors in the study appeared to be unaware of various research activities in their college than were administrators.

All respondents concurred with the view that the colleges are primarily teaching institutions.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The major task of this study was to present a description of the current status of the research function in Alberta community colleges. A profile or description of the status of research as it now exists, and as the respondents thought it could exist, was developed.

The basic assumption that research to aid an institution in problem solving should exist at the college level can be supported from the literature. This study describes the nature of college research in general and the situation in Alberta's public community colleges in particular. More specifically it has investigated what the scope and limits should be and the requirements necessary to fulfill a purposeful research function in the community college.

Two-year colleges are often considered to be mainly preparatory institutions for university entrance. However, two-year colleges also perform an important function in continuing education in the post-secondary field for those who do not wish to go to university or a technical institute. Because of this, "The functional emphasis of

colleges is on teaching rather than research . . ." (Campbell, 1969:43). This should not preclude the importance of college institutional research. The tasks of teaching and conducting institutional research need not be mutually exclusive.

Many college administrators contend that the teaching and content research functions--that is, research conducted by staff in their discipline--conflict at the community college level. Time for content research may compete with teaching duties. The degree to which content research should be encouraged in the community colleges could form an important problem to be investigated by institutional research. "Unquestionably, the junior college must be committed to excellence in teaching. The fundamental question is how this goal relates to research" (Forbes, 1966:8).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

There is currently a gap in our knowledge concerning the status of research in the community college. The community college is the fastest growing institution in the field of post-secondary education. It is essential that the functions and potential of community colleges be understood. This study was intended to help fill the gap in our knowledge and understanding of the function and purpose of community colleges.

This study documented the perceptions of those who

are involved in the teaching and administration of representative community colleges in Alberta concerning this research component. Answers to fundamental questions regarding the place of research--both content and institutional--in the Alberta community college may have considerable significance to the future development of these institutions. At stake is the matter of institutional identity--that is, what is a community college? If, as the "conventional wisdom" has it, the community college is a "teaching" institution, does this mean that there is no room for a research function? If there is room for research, in what forms? Under what conditions? Carried on by whom? With what institutional support? The study of these problems should provide guidelines as to the future direction of the development of community colleges.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of this study was to describe the extent and nature of research in community colleges in Alberta. The college research function has been divided into two major areas that have been referred to as institutional research and content research. It was felt that by including both forms of research in the profile a greater degree of understanding of college research would be realized.

THE NATURE AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

The study focused on three Alberta community colleges.

College A is a career-oriented post-secondary institution. The majority of programs in this college are designed to prepare students for employment rather than transfer to other institutions. This college had an enrollment of approximately 1,000 students.

College B offers both university transfer and career education. This college was the largest in the study with an enrollment of approximately 2,300 students.

College C offers transfer programs for the most part; that is, most of its programs are designed with the intent of preparing students for eventual university entrance. This college was the smallest in the study with approximately 300 students.

By concentrating on these colleges it was possible to obtain opinions from personnel who work in quite different college settings. The assumption was made that a sample drawn from three colleges with these diverse characteristics may yield findings indicative of the views of staff in the Alberta college system as a whole.

The study would generally be classified as a descriptive study. That is, its intent was to describe the situation as it exists in relation to institutional research and content research in the selected Alberta

colleges.

The data were gathered using the semi-structured interview technique. This allowed for deviation from a rigid response pattern to a set of questions as might be found in a mailed questionnaire.

In a classification of research instruments, the method used here would approximate the "focused interview." According to Thompson (1969:39-40), in that situation,

The interviewer knows in advance what aspects of the situation he wishes to explore and begins the interview guided by a list of topics that are to be dealt with. They provide a framework for the investigation, but the manner in which the questions are asked, and their timing are left largely to the interviewer's discretion. He has freedom to explore reasons and motives, and to probe further in directions that may have been unanticipated.

It was decided that the necessary information would be obtained from interviews with ten persons from each of the selected colleges. Furthermore, it was decided that the sample should include personnel from administration, career studies and university transfer programs. It was assumed that the perspectives of staff members from these areas may differ on the nature and extent of the need for research at the college level. For example, those involved with transfer courses may see a greater need for content research, whereas those involved in administration may see a greater need for institutional research. By covering the possibility of different perspectives a truer picture of the question would be obtained.

DEFINITIONS

The term research has different meanings for different people; furthermore, research is a broad concept which includes activities ranging from pure or basic research to applied or action research.

Pure or basic research can be understood as an inquiry or endeavour to discover new facts. Applied or action research can be interpreted as that which aids decision-making or solves problems of a practical nature. In this study the concept of research was divided into what has been referred to as institutional research and content research. Within each of these divisions, however, it was assumed that both types of research, i.e., basic or action, could exist.

Definitions relevant to this study are:

(a) Institutional research--The collection and analysis of data for the purpose of solving problems that relate to a particular institution by that institution. The findings of institutional research may or may not have application to other institutions. For example, an institution may wish to have a projection of student enrollment for their area.

(b) Content research--Research which relates to a particular discipline. For example, an instructor may wish to discover the best method of presenting material to a college class.

(c) The term "college" must be qualified and

interpreted from context. "College" itself has usually referred to a four-year, degree granting institution. The term "junior college" has generally referred to an institution which offered the first two years of a four-year degree program. The meaning attached to these terms has changed over the last few years. For example, as stated by Harlacher (1969:2)

Junior college . . . describes an institution that primarily duplicates organizationally and fulfills philosophically the first two years of the four-year senior college. The true community college, on the other hand, connotes an institution that has changed from an isolated entity to one seeking full partnership with its community. In the process, it has become for its district community a cultural center, a focal point of intellectual life, a source of solidarity, a fount of local pride.

The interpretation given to the term "college" in Alberta has also undergone change. This change has affected the legal title of Alberta colleges.

The first public junior college in Alberta was established at Lethbridge in 1957. The Alberta Public Junior Colleges Act of 1958 required that the term "junior college" form a part of the name of every public college in Alberta. The implication was that a college was essentially an institution providing the first two years of a university program.

Today the college in Alberta is intended to fulfill a community need by also offering terminal or career oriented two-year programs. Under section 2 (d) of The Colleges Act the two-year, public institution is now

referred to as "college" or "public college." The term "junior college" no longer forms a part of the name of the two-year, public institution in Alberta. This new approach is in keeping with a greater emphasis on the community aspect of colleges as discussed by Harlacher.

The overall intent of the college system in Alberta is to make available to a larger segment of the population a form of post-secondary education that is not necessarily university or technical institute training. Because of this, Alberta colleges are essentially teaching institutions serving local community needs.

For the purposes of this study, the term "college" refers to the two-year, non-degree granting, post-secondary educational institution serving local community needs. Excluded by this definition are the agricultural colleges, technical institutes, and private colleges. "Community college" was assumed to be interchangeable and/or implied when college is used, unless it is specifically stated otherwise or implied in context.

DELIMITATIONS

This study was confined to three Alberta public community colleges, each of which is a non-degree granting, post-secondary institution.

LIMITATIONS

1. As the sample was limited to three colleges in

the Alberta college system, generalizations might not be applicable to other colleges in the system.

2. No follow-up of the original interview was made which could have made the findings more reliable.

SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an introduction to the study. The remainder of the thesis is organized as follows: a review of the related literature (Chapter 2); an outline of the research procedures (Chapter 3); an analysis of the data (Chapters 4 and 5); and a conclusion with summary and recommendations (Chapter 6).

Chapter 2

A REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This chapter reviews the literature that relates to research in the community colleges. The chapter is divided into two major sections: the first deals with institutional research; the second, with content research.

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Institutional research is conducted by an institution to facilitate the administration and operation of the organization. It is research of a self-study nature designed for self-help. Institutional research may be conducted to aid the decision-making process in an institution, to aid curriculum development, or to facilitate short and long-range planning.

Institutional research, according to Rourke and Brooks (1966:44),

. . . is a variegated form of organization self-study designed to help colleges and universities gather an expanding range of information about their own internal operations and the effectiveness with which they are using their resources.

The co-ordination and handling of information is a requisite aspect of institutional research. In some

educational institutions the co-ordination of information is managed by an office of institutional research. In this sense an office of institutional research may be a clearing-house of information.

When information is used by an institution to aid the decision-making process or the planning and development process, this may be considered institutional research. However, as Roueche and Boggs maintain (1968:50), "The mere compilation of data does not constitute institutional research." Some analysis and suggested application of the data are required before it can be considered research.

Some basic requirements for institutional research in higher education suggest themselves (Roueche and Boggs, 1968; Rourke and Brooks, 1966:44-45; Hall, 1962:24-32; Mayhew, 1964:6). For example, there must be a recognized need by an institution for some form of institutional research program. It is not always practicable for an institution to turn to an outside organization to aid it in problem solving. Other requirements may include support from the personnel of the institution involved, direct or indirect financial support, and the employment of competent research workers. In a program of self-study, an institution should be willing to examine critical issues and accept facts which may be disturbing. A final point which may be applicable to an institutional research program is that it should involve consideration of a long-range master plan if one exists. When these

requirements are met, an institution should be able to provide a viable institutional research program.

Organized institutional research in community colleges is a relatively recent phenomenon. Much of the research concerning colleges over the last fifty years has been conducted by institutions other than the community colleges themselves (Roueche, 1967:20). In recent years, it has become the practice for colleges to answer their own problems with their own institutional research programs. At the moment, fewer than twenty percent of American colleges have institutional research programs (Roueche, 1967:23). A similar survey has not been conducted in Canadian colleges.

It is apparent from the literature that college institutional research is not receiving the attention it deserves. As Roueche (1967:23) maintains,

If programs are to be planned and systematically evaluated, if effects of the college on its community and on the lives of its students are to be assessed, junior college institutional research must be supported to a degree greater than its current level.

From statements such as these, a need for institutional research can be recognized. Roueche supports institutional research in the colleges from the point of view of program planning and evaluation, and the effects of colleges on their students and the community.

Roueche and Boggs (1968:6) have indicated that there is as great a need for institutional research in the two-year community college as there is in the four-year

institution. They also suggested that money was not the most important prerequisite to establishing an institutional research program. Medsker (1960:157) has also added that:

Practically every two-year college in America could develop a viable program of institutional research if it would just utilize the talents of its present faculty and administrative staff.

A discussion of certain characteristics of the contemporary community college underline the importance of the institutional research function.

According to Erickson (1971:406-408), colleges are the fastest growing educational institutions in America today. A similar situation exists in Canada. For example, as has been stated in the Alberta Colleges Commission First Annual Report (1969-70:10),

The Public Colleges constitute a rapidly growing segment of the post-secondary education system in the Province of Alberta. This growth is demonstrated in a variety of ways including the broadening of program offerings, the expansion of physical facilities, the establishment of new colleges in a number of centers, and rapidly increasing enrolments.

The Colleges Commission in their First Annual Report (1969-70:26) has projected the enrolments in the colleges in Alberta from 3,591 actual in 1969-70 to 15,200 probable in 1974-75. Probably the most significant reason for this rapid growth is the "open-door" policy of our college system.

The problems that accompany the rapid growth of an educational institution of this sort are manifold. For example, an institution must design a program that serves

the needs of the community, making allowance for changing demands. Problems in relation to financing, teaching loads, physical plant development and the many decisions that must be made in daily administration as well as long-range planning could be handled more adequately with the aid of institutional research.

Cohen and Quimbey (1970) support the idea that many

. . . research efforts in the junior college should be addressed to accounting for the impact of junior colleges on their students, their parent communities, and society at large.

Community colleges are still developing an identity which even the educators directing the various institutions do not fully comprehend. As Medsker (1969:182) states in reference to community college education: "It is still not fully understood either by the general public or by all the education profession. And it has not achieved a complete identity." This search for a complete identity by the community colleges in Alberta constitutes another of the major problems which institutional research could help resolve.

CONTENT RESEARCH

Content research is defined as research which relates to a particular discipline or field. Within the spectrum of content research lies basic research and applied research.

When the various classifications of research are placed on a continuum it can be seen that there may be areas in which institutional research and content research would overlap. For example, research which may be performed in institutional problem solving could have application in a discipline. It may also be true that research conducted in a particular discipline could have institutional application. For example, if an instructor were to discover that a particular method of presentation to college students was inappropriate for his discipline it may be inappropriate for the entire college.

One of the questions to be dealt with by institutional research could be the weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of having content research conducted in the community college.

Content research, if it exists at all in the community college, must not interfere with the teaching process. In order to fulfill the overall intent of the community college system in Alberta, the colleges must remain essentially teaching institutions. There is always the danger that a college teacher may begin to take a greater interest in content research than he is in meeting the needs of his students. As Fast (1970-71:33) states:

. . . there must be a major emphasis on teaching in the college, and little emphasis on [content] research. The teacher who is more concerned with his research projects than he is with teaching his students has no place in a two-year college in Alberta.

Much the same stand as that taken by Fast is

reflected in the Alberta Colleges Commission's First Annual Report (1969-70:23) when they say in speaking of the services of Alberta public colleges:

The highest priority is placed on proper guidance, counselling and instruction so that the student's educational development will result in an individual serving both his own, his community's and society's needs.

To this end, college teachers tend to be instruction rather than research oriented--somewhat different from the universities' approach.

It is possible to see from the literature that teaching and content research does not have to be an either/or situation. Content research, it may be argued, could provide a supportive role to the teaching function. Forbes (1966:9) defends content research in the college from the point of view that it helps maintain a high level of professional competence on the part of the teacher. The purpose of content research here is not necessarily publication but rather to aid the instructor to better understand his discipline and communicate this understanding to his students.

Benezet (1968:30) also supports the concept that content research is beneficial to meaningful communication between teacher and student regardless of the level or type of college.

Kozar (1970:3) goes so far as to say, in relation to transfer courses in Alberta's community colleges, that content research is a must in order to provide similar kinds of experience for students and staff that are

available at the universities. These similar kinds of research are those that are associated with library and laboratory research which provide basic experience but which does not have to be the kind which results in publication.

It is apparent throughout the literature that community colleges have as their primary purpose a teaching and service function. Content research can be seen as being a complementary activity to teaching. Support is given for the content research function only if it supports the main purposes of the college and should never be supported at the expense of teaching. Whether or not content research should be conducted at a particular community college may be one of the questions that institutional research would investigate.

SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed the literature that relates to research in the community colleges. From this review a few generalized statements can be made.

Community colleges are among the fastest growing institutions in education today. As such, they are experiencing many new problems. Institutional research is conducted by an institution mainly to serve its own needs. Institutional research attempts to supply the knowledge requirements of a community college in order that it may adequately meet the community's needs, plan programs,

develop an identity and generally aid the decision-making process.

The relevance of institutional research to a community college is apparent from the literature. Institutional research appears to be especially important to a developing college or college system in order to facilitate the solving of many of the problems mentioned.

Content research may further knowledge in a discipline or it may be of the type which just facilitates the functioning of a classroom. The status of content research in the community college is not resolved in the literature.

Chapter 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interview schedule was designed in two parts, the first relating to institutional research, the second relating to content research. There were eleven questions in each section with one question at the end of the schedule to allow for elaboration on any point the respondent may have felt had been neglected.

A preliminary statement was discussed with each respondent before each interview began. This was designed to ensure that each respondent had an understanding of the nature and purpose of the study and to ensure a common interpretation of the terms used between interviewer and respondent.

The interview strategy was to have the respondent restrict his or her comments to the major focus of the research component under discussion. It was necessary to return the respondents' comments to the topic if they became related to areas other than those of concern in the study. The respondents were encouraged to express their opinions on various aspects of the research component in the colleges. These impressions were based on their

awareness, not necessarily factual information.

An example of the semi-structured interview schedule can be found in Appendix A.

THE SAMPLE

Interviews were conducted with ten respondents in each of the three colleges involved in the study for a total of thirty interviews.

An attempt was made to have a cross-section of areas or disciplines in each college represented in the sample. An attempt was also made to ensure that both the views of staff members and administrators of each college were represented in the sample. Names of the respondents were randomly selected from lists of staff and administrators as found in the current calendars of each of the colleges.

Permission to conduct the study was first obtained from the president of each of the colleges. Each person selected for the study in the college was then given the option of participating or withdrawing. In College A, two substitutes from the original list had to be made, in College B, four and in College C, two. The reasons given by those on the original list who did not take part in the study were as follows: five were not available during the time scheduled for interviews, two were too busy, and one felt that he had taken part in enough studies for one year. In each case the substitutes were selected from the

same or similar disciplines as the original member.

Table 1
Categorization of Respondents
in the Study

Area	Senior Administrator ^a n=4			Department Head ^a n=10			Instructor ^a n=16			Total
	College			College			College			
	A ^b	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	
Science				2	1	1	2	2	2	10
Social Science/ Humanities				1			1	2	2	6
Business						1		1		2
Tech-Voc				1						1
Other:										
Admin.	3	1			1					5
Counselling							2	1		3
Cont. Ed.				1		1				2
Phys. Ed.								1		1

^aSenior Administrator indicates a president or vice-president; Department Head--primarily administrator--may have teaching duties; Instructor--deals essentially with students.

^bNo Senior Administrators were available for interviewing in College A.

In College A, five of the respondents were instructors and five were administrators. The same division was obtained in College B. In College C, six respondents were instructors and four were administrators.

THE INTERVIEW

The interviews for this study were conducted in the three colleges during three consecutive weeks in January and February, 1972. Three days were allowed in each college to complete the data gathering.

The starting time and finishing time were recorded for each interview on the interview schedule. In College A the interviews ranged from thirty minutes to eighty minutes, with an average time of sixty minutes. In College B the times ranged from 40 minutes to 105 minutes, with an average time of 59.5 minutes. In College C the times ranged from twenty minutes to eighty minutes, with an average time of fifty-two minutes.

The respondents were not asked to do any preparatory work for the interviews nor were they asked to give any written replies to questions. All interviews were recorded on the interview schedules by the interviewer.

An attempt was made to tape record at least two sample interviews from each college. This was not accomplished in College A because of equipment failure. A sample interview was transcribed and can be found in Appendix C.

SUMMARY

The study design was outlined in this chapter. A brief description of the interview schedule, the sample,

and the interviewing procedures was presented. The relevant documents involved in the design and execution of the study are to be found in the Appendices.

The following chapters present an analysis of the data. Chapter Four deals with institutional research; Chapter Five, with content research. These two chapters are organized around the questions asked in the interview schedule. Each question is presented along with a discussion of the responses received. Where applicable, a table summarizing the interview data accompanies the question.

Chapter 4

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

This chapter analyses the responses to the eleven questions which related to institutional research.

The questions are dealt with sequentially. Where applicable, the discussion of each question takes as a starting point a tabulation of interview responses.

QUESTION 1: What kinds of problems or issues do you encounter in your work at the college for which research studies might help provide answers?

This question was designed to encourage the respondent to begin thinking of problems at his institution for which institutional research might have application. An elaboration of many of these views was obtained later in the interview.

Inspection of Table 2 shows that the most frequently mentioned area requiring study was that concerning curriculum and instruction. This problem area was mentioned equally often by administrators and instructors. Other areas most often mentioned were student studies, staff studies, problems concerning funds and facilities, and community needs. Each of these areas is discussed below; comparisons among colleges are presented in the

discussion of each problem area.

Table 2

Number of Responses Relating to Different Problem Areas by College and by Staff Position

Problem Areas ^a	Senior Administrator			Department Head			Instructor			Total	
	College			College			College				
	A n=(0)	B (3)	C (1)	A (5)	B (2)	C (3)	A (5)	B (5)	C (6)		
Curriculum and Instruction	1			1			3	2	2	11	
Student Studies		1		1			1	1	2	8	
Staff Studies		1					1	3	3	8	
Funds and Facilities	2	1		1	1		1	1	1	8	
Community Needs	1	1		2	1			2		7	
Communication								1	1		

^aThese problem areas are elaborated on in the text.

Curriculum and instruction. Eleven respondents identified problems of curriculum and instruction as priority issues for institutional research. The responses were distributed evenly over the three colleges (A-3; B-3; C-5), and ranged over concerns as diverse as transferability of credit to cost-benefit analysis of programs.

Consider College A first; as noted above three respondents from this institution suggested a need for research in the area of curriculum and instruction at the college level. One of these three related this to the transferability of credit to the university level and suggested a need for more transfer studies. One respondent stated a problem in the form of a question, "Is there a better method of instruction?" and went on to suggest that a greater emphasis on programmed learning may have application in the colleges.

The need for research relating to the area of curriculum and instruction was also expressed by one administrator and two instructors from College B. In College C, this particular need was expressed by three administrators and two instructors.

One respondent in College B, an administrator, would have all programs evaluated on a cost-benefit basis. It was felt in this instance that a relationship should be shown between the personal development of a student and the cost of a particular program. If the program could demonstrate no beneficial relationship then the program should be dropped by the college.

Student studies. Eight respondents mentioned student studies for institutional research.

In College A, it was felt that if the academic level of the student was better understood by the college staff

then their needs could more adequately be met. The question was expressed, "Should the college provide regular remedial reading programs for the students?"

Many of the responses received to Question 1 in College A were expressed by the respondents in College B. For example, the need for research into the type of student the college receives was expressed as well as the need for continuous program up-grading. Respondents in College B suggested follow-up studies of their students as well as attempting to find an answer to the broad question, "What is being learned?"

Other respondents in College B felt that there was a need to develop a profile of individuals in the college, both staff and students, which would provide information that could indicate the area in which the person should study. One possible reason for this being mentioned in College B may stem from the fact that the college was preparing for a move to a new campus which intended to focus on study of an individual nature. This "cognitive map" would provide a description of the individual's interests, aptitudes and abilities. In relation to the student, this would help provide some direction as to career choice.

Four of ten respondents in College C related to student study needs. These respondents felt that it was important to discover, if possible, the kinds of students they are getting, the kinds of students they are sending

out, where they are going, what they are doing, and how successful they are. The respondents also felt it would be of great benefit to the college to discover what the needs of the students were and their goals.

Staff studies. Studies related to faculty were mentioned by respondents in all three colleges. Seven respondents in Colleges B and C--six of them instructors--mentioned a need for research in this area as compared to one instructor in College A. Only College C respondents elaborated on these studies.

Institutional research issues in relation to faculty were mentioned by three respondents in College C. An instructor suggested that the outlook or attitude of the staff should be investigated so steps could be taken to prevent the staff from having a monolithic, that is a fixed or singular, view of the college. The idea being conveyed in this point was similar to that mentioned in relation to student studies, that is, the better you understand a particular group the better able you are to deal with that group.

The work load of the college teacher was felt to be a worthwhile issue for study by the college which could also be related to other colleges in the Alberta system.

The other issue which related to faculty extended to the higher administration of the college and the

community at large. It was felt by this respondent that it would be a worthwhile project to investigate the relationship between instructors, the administration, the college board and the community.

Funds and facilities. Two respondents each in Colleges A and C mentioned a need for studies on the use of facilities in the college and the problems of space allocation.

The need for studies concerning facilities were expressed more often by respondents in College B than either Colleges A or C. This again could be because of the pending move to their new campus and their consequent greater awareness of allocation of facilities and desire to meet community needs.

Community needs. It was also noted that some of the responses related to the public. In this area the question was expressed, "How do you determine the needs of the public?" There was also a need expressed for studies which would predict enrollment, and if possible, predict pay scales of future college graduates. It was felt that this should be an on-going process which would aid the college in developing programs and more adequately meet the needs of the public. In connection with these forms of study, one respondent felt that present programs should be constantly upgraded in order to ensure that the needs of the job were being met.

Many of the issues or problems discussed by the respondents of the three colleges were similar. The major differences were only a matter of emphasis. An example of this is apparent in the area of curriculum and instruction. Problems in this area in Colleges A and B tended to focus on meeting community needs whereas in College C, where the greatest concern over program studies was expressed, the discussion of course development also related to the possibility of acceptance by the universities for purposes of transfer. Many of the respondents in this college, however, also felt the need for expansion into adult up-grading or continuing education courses which would help preserve the unique character of the college as opposed to becoming just an appendage of the universities.

QUESTION 2: Can you give examples of any such problem solving studies that have been carried out in recent years?

This question was designed to discover if the respondent was aware of any research on problems of an institutional nature that had been done in relation to his college in approximately the last five years.

The respondents in College A were aware of very little formal institutional research that had been conducted. As shown in Table 3, two of the ten respondents were aware of no research of this nature being done at all. The remaining eight respondents were aware of one

study each. Two of these studies were of a survey nature conducted by members of the counselling division, one had to do with the type of English program which the college should require, one had to do with staff work load, one had to do with the possibility of expanding the college to offer instruction on a nearby Indian reservation, one was a projected enrollment study and the other study related to the operation of a particular program in one division only. The College A respondents reported that no action resulted from any of these studies of which they were aware.

Table 3

**Awareness of Staff of Any Problem Solving Studies
Done at their College in Recent Years**

	College A	College B	College C	Total
Administrator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator
n= (5)	(5)	(5)	(5)	(6)
Aware of No Such Studies	2	1	3	6
Aware of One Such Study	5	3	3	21
Aware of More than One Such Study		2	1	3

^aThe administrative category is collapsed because there is no intent to distinguish responses on a basis of administrative level.

An institutional research study was also mentioned as being required in the area of communication. Two of the respondents felt that much conflict had resulted from misunderstanding and lack of communication between divisions and between staff and administration. This conflict was felt to exist mainly by those who were strictly instructors and had no regular communication with the administration of the college.

Respondents from College B were more aware of institutional research studies being conducted at their institution. This was due mainly to the several surveys concerning problems which were brought to the attention of staff members in preparation for their move to a new campus. An administrator felt that a serious attempt was being made to study the issues involved including as many of the staff as possible. All of the respondents, in varying degrees, felt this to be true. Other studies which had been done at College B had to do with drop-outs and transfer courses.

At College C only one staff member, a senior administrator, was aware of more than one institutional research study undertaken at the college. College C also had undertaken studies which were directed at the development of a general academic plan and the construction of a new facility for the college. Three of the respondents were aware of no institutional research that had been done at their college. The other respondents

could suggest only in general terms because they did not have specific, first-hand knowledge, a survey that had been done on their transfer students or as in one division, a follow-up survey which had been conducted on their graduates.

In conclusion, it can be noted that twenty-four of the thirty respondents were aware of at least one institutional research study having been done at their college. The six respondents who were unaware of any such studies were instructors. This could suggest some lack of communication within Colleges A and C, which in turn is puzzling due to the relatively small size of the two institutions.

QUESTION 3: How were these studies carried out?

Institutional research studies can be undertaken in a number of ways. For example, a study could be commissioned to an outside consultant. Alternatively, a staff member could be provided with released time for a specific study. A third possibility might take the form of a committee studying a problem with no released time being provided expressly for this purpose. The intention of Questions 3 and 4 was to investigate the range of mechanisms now being used in Alberta colleges for the support of institutional research. Question 3 is limited to the single variable: insider versus outsider? A summary of responses is presented in Table 4.

Eight respondents in College A stated that the studies mentioned were carried out by staff members. The

remaining two respondents could not recall any studies being done at all and therefore could not say who may have carried them out.

Table 4

How the Institutional Research Studies
were Carried Out

	College A	College B	College C
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator
Outside Researcher			1
Staff Members	5	3	5
Question Was Non-Applicable ^a		2	1
			3

^aSix respondents were unaware of any institutional research studies having been done at their colleges.

College B respondents, in eight of the ten replies, stated that their institutional research projects had been conducted primarily by staff members. One respondent mentioned university students as being the prime source of researchers for most studies on the colleges. Another respondent could not say who carried out research projects because he was unaware of any such projects. Two of the respondents who suggested that issues were dealt with

largely by staff also mentioned that an outside education consultant was brought in to deal with issues which related to the development of the new college campus.

In College C, six of the ten respondents stated that if any research was conducted it was done by staff members. Three respondents could not say how these studies were carried out and one mentioned the use of outside researchers.

In summary, the major point to be made here appears to be that when research studies of an institutional nature are conducted, the work is performed by the various members of the colleges' staff. All of the respondents who could not reply to this question were instructors.

QUESTION 4: In the studies carried out by the college staff, has it been the practice for staff members to be given time for this purpose or is it done in addition to their regular work load?

In College A, seven of the ten respondents stated that generally speaking any such studies or surveys were done in addition to the regular workload of staff members. Two respondents did not know and the tenth respondent, an administrator, said that it was part of their regular duties. Two respondents in College A did mention an exception to this general rule when they stated they were aware of one case in which a staff member was relieved of his regular duties for one month to do a study on

Indian education for the college.

Table 5

Time Allotted to Staff Members for
Institutional Research Projects

	College A	College B	College C		
Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor
Given time for this purpose		1	1		
In addition to regular workload	4	3	3	2	4
Part of regular workload	1		1	1	
Don't know		2		1	3

In College B, five respondents stated that any studies in which staff were involved were done in addition to their regular work load. Two respondents felt that research studies of this nature were a part of their regular work load; one of these was an administrator, the other an instructor. An instructor replied that this area is not defined in the college and that no set policy exists. Another instructor stated that staff members have on occasion been given released time or extra money to become involved with institutional research projects. The tenth respondent, an administrator, mentioned the

current contract under which staff members are working which allows for twelve hours of instruction per week with three hours a week for research and development. This given time was supposed to be used to prepare for the adjustment of the college to its new campus.

Seven respondents from College C stated that any involvement the staff had with institutional research was in addition to their regular workload. The remaining three stated that they really did not know but they assumed that any involvement would be a part of their regular duties.

In summary, the replies to this question indicate that when college staff members are expected to take part in studies of an institutional research nature, they generally do so in addition to their regular duties.

QUESTION 5: For the studies mentioned above, who generally commissions such studies?

An inspection of Table 6 reveals that in all three colleges, institutional research studies are, for the most part, commissioned by the college administration.

For College A, the college administration was cited six times as being the group which generally commissions institutional research studies in the college. One of these respondents, an administrator, felt that either directly or indirectly, the college president had the ultimate responsibility for all of the research

studies in the college. One other respondent felt that individual staff members became involved in surveys of their own accord. Another felt that the instructor in consultation with the department head initiated studies. Two respondents could not say who commissioned such studies.

Table 6

Respondents' Impressions as to Who Commissions
Institutional Research Studies

Studies Commissioned by	College A		College B		College C		Total
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	
College Administration	3	3	3	2	3		14
Department Head and Instructor	1		1	2	1	1	6
Instructor	1		1			2	4
Don't know		2		1		3	6

In College B, college administrative staff members were cited as being the instigators of institutional research studies by five respondents. Three respondents felt that instructors, in conjunction with their department heads, generally initiate such studies. One administrator said that it was the instructor who initiated such studies.

One respondent from this college did not know where the studies originated and he felt that as far as the average staff member was concerned, "They just happened."

In College C, three respondents felt that all institutional research studies were commissioned by the college president in consultation with the senior administrative staff. Two other respondents felt that studies of this nature were commissioned from various levels within the college, often beginning with the instructor, and depending on the complexity of the study in question it could go as high as the president before receiving final approval. Both these respondents felt that the whole function of institutional research would be facilitated by the establishment of a planning board within the college which would coordinate all such studies. The staff--that is, instructors and department heads--were cited as commissioning such studies by two respondents. The three other respondents from this college could not say who commissions research studies because they were not aware of any that had ever been done.

In summary, the respondents' impressions as to who generally commissions institutional research studies vary widely. In most instances it would appear that such studies are usually commissioned by the administration of the particular college.

QUESTION 6: If the necessary resources were available, what in your opinion would be the highest priority areas for study?

This question presented the respondents with an opportunity to discuss the greatest problem, from his point of view, that demanded attention in his college. Many respondents, in their reply to this question, chose to isolate and elaborate one topic which was mentioned in Question 1. Table 7 rank orders in terms of frequency the general areas mentioned by the respondents as requiring study.

Objectives and goals. The highest priority area of study identified by the respondents had to do with objectives and goals of the colleges.

Two respondents in College A suggested the need for long range planning of goals for the college. It was suggested that this planning should be an on-going process. One respondent here felt that the college, rather than moving towards goals, was guided at present by moving away from problems.

In College B, one respondent felt that each division in the college required study along the lines of determining the objectives of each division, followed by an evaluation of performance to see if the objectives were being achieved. Another respondent replied to this question in a very similar manner with a greater emphasis

on the college objectives as a whole combined with a question as to what it was that should be taught and why.

Table 7
Highest Priority Areas for Study

Areas of Study	College A		College B		College C ^a		Total
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	
Objectives and Goals	1	1	1	1	2	4	10
Student Studies	1	2	3	2	1		9
Operational Policy	1		1	2			4
Curriculum and Instruction	1	1			1		3
Facility Studies	1	1					2
Staff Studies						1	1

^aOne respondent from College C was unable to think of any area which required study.

Six of the ten College C respondents spoke of the need for research which would provide an identity or philosophy for their college. Included were replies which indicated a need for ensuring that the educational needs of the area the college was serving were being met, and the need for establishing some form of professional

development for staff to ensure that the expectations of the college coincided with the staff understanding of college purposes.

Student studies. Student studies were the second most often mentioned area. Inspection of Table 7 shows as well that at least one respondent in each college identified student studies as the number one priority for institutional research.

In College A, three respondents mentioned topics relating directly to students which required immediate attention. Two of these respondents felt that the need for a remedial reading program for their students should be immediately investigated. They felt that many of the other problems in dealing with students stemmed from their generally low level of reading ability. The third respondent suggested that it would be very beneficial to the college to have some idea of the future enrollment figures and potential employment of students in various areas.

Five respondents from College B mentioned student studies as the area requiring the greatest amount of institutional research. These replies focused on the need for the development of student profiles by which student characteristics could be identified. It was felt that if student interests, abilities and personalities could be described, the college would be better able to develop

programs which would suit the student's style of learning.

One respondent from College C, an instructor, mentioned student studies requiring institutional research without going into specifics.

Operational policy. The area referred to as operational policy has to do with any aspect of the administration or coordination of activities in a college which affects its operation on a day-to-day basis. Some respondents felt that a lack of policy of this nature affected the general functioning of the college.

One respondent from College A, an administrator, related his reply to the need for a day-to-day operational policy. He gave examples of this, keeping the administration of the financial and instructional programs of the college, "Well in hand."

Three respondents from College B identified areas requiring study of an administrative or organizational nature. One felt that an investigation into the distribution of resources would benefit the college. The two other respondents stated an interest in seeing a profile of the labour market developed and maintained in order to keep programs relevant to the working world. This was not mentioned under student studies as above because the respondents emphasized the administrative aspect.

Curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and instruction issues were referred to directly by respondents

from Colleges A and C. Both respondents from College A wanted the "suitability," that is, appropriateness to the college environment, of all courses on their campus investigated. The College C respondent referred to curriculum and instruction only in general terms.

Other. The need for facility studies was expressed by two respondents from College A. These respondents were concerned about space allocation among the various divisions of the college.

Only one respondent, this one from College C, mentioned the staff as being an area which required study. It was felt here that not enough was known about the characteristics of college staff.

In summary, the results from this question would indicate that the respondents are most concerned with issues which deal with the objectives or goals of the colleges and the students in the colleges.

The respondents appeared quite concerned that the colleges develop a unique character which would distinguish them from other institutions in the post-secondary field. There appeared to be little or no difference between administrators and instructors in their statements of priorities.

QUESTION 7: Do you feel that the college should study other areas which may be of concern but possibly not as high priority?

In most instances the responses given in Question 6 were mentioned by the other respondents in Question 7. Because of this only those responses that add a new dimension to the areas requiring study are mentioned. The frequencies of these responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Other Areas of Study

Areas of Study	College A		College B		College C		Total
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	
Student Studies	2	4	4	4	2	3	19
Curriculum and Instruction	1	3	2	4	3	5	18
Staff Studies	2	2	2		4	4	14
Operational Policy	2		2	2	1	3	10
Objectives and Goals	4	2	1		2		9
Facility Studies		1					1

Student studies. There are no notable differences

in administrator-instructor breakdown in this question.

A new aspect of student studies, mentioned by one College A respondent, was that of the success rate of the returning drop-out. In College B the respondents who had not mentioned problems which could be classified as student studies previously generally did in Question 7. Respondents who previously mentioned an area of study as top priority may have had their response to "Other Areas of Study" classified under the same heading because they mentioned a study of a different nature for the same area. Five respondents from College C felt the need for more studies which concerned the student; two stated their response in the form of a question. One question was, "Does a student have to flow through a sequence of studies to be educated?" The other question posed was, "The changing group--(i.e., students) how can it be studied?"

One respondent from College C identified a study having to do with both faculty and students: a study of the social relationships that existed between staff and students. The question was (paraphrased), "What is the most desirable social distance to be maintained between college staff and students?"

Curriculum and instruction. The need for improving instruction methods for the college situation was seen in College A. Four respondents felt that traditional methods of instruction were not always appropriate for the college

environment. They could offer no immediate suggestions for improvement other than the suggestion that it receive attention.

College B was in the process of preparing to move to a new campus the following year and because of this much work was being done in the area of improved instructional procedures. Most divisions of the college were attempting to adapt as much of their course work as possible to an individual study program. It was felt by one respondent that careful follow-up studies should be conducted of the individual study program, both from a student and a faculty point of view.

In College C, the possibility of developing an audio-tutorial approach was mentioned as potential improvement over the traditional methods of instruction for the college.

Staff studies. The need for staff studies was mentioned by respondents in all three colleges. Only respondents from Colleges A and B elaborated on this point. In College A the suggestions were made that negotiation, fringe benefits and staff utilization studies be made. Two respondents in College B felt that profiles of staff characteristics would be beneficial for the selection of college staff.

Operational policy. Studies relating to operational policy were mentioned by respondents in all three colleges.

Any reference made to finance was categorized under operational policy because it tended to affect the day-to-day operation of the colleges. Finance was mentioned by two respondents in College A in the following way: they felt that the need existed to develop a method of distributing funds to colleges on something other than a per student basis. Four respondents in College B mentioned finance studies as requiring attention. These comments related to the need for studies on the relationship between cost input and benefits derived from various programs of the college. Similar comments were made by four respondents from College C.

Objectives and goals. Goals and objectives were mentioned as an area requiring study by respondents in all three colleges.

Comments in relation to planning were categorized under objectives and goals of the colleges.

College A respondents mentioned planning as an area definitely requiring attention by the college. One respondent felt that this should be done in close conjunction with the rest of the college system and on a long term basis. This respondent was unaware of the Colleges Commission involvement in this area. Five others in this area felt that program planning should be a continuous re-evaluation process and also that facilities of the future should be designed with flexibility in mind.

One respondent from College B contended that a complete analysis of the institution's goals and objectives were required in order to have adequate planning for the future. He felt that this would make for a progressive and dynamic institution as opposed to one which was not.

For program or long-range institutional planning from College C, no new ideas that had not already been mentioned in areas of high priority were suggested.

Summary. The response to Question 7 would indicate that student studies and curriculum and instruction are also priority concerns of college staff members. Those respondents who failed to mention these categories as high priority areas of study in their answers to Question 6 generally did in this question. An important impression received from the response to this question was that the staff in the community colleges are quite concerned with discovering more about the type of student they are dealing with and the appropriateness of the curriculum presented.

QUESTION 8: What in your opinion is the greatest problem
that must be overcome in order to have a
viable institutional research program?

Table 9 presents the major problems to be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program. This section presents these problem areas in order of priority. The highest priority areas were a lack of funds and time.

Financial support. Three respondents from College A cited lack of necessary funding as being the greatest problem to overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program. One of these, an administrator, felt that the college board was much too money oriented and that their financial policies would first have to be changed. The other respondents felt that sufficient financial support for institutional research would solve all other problems and that it must be recognized that research programs can at times be costly with no guarantee of beneficial returns.

Table 9

Major Problem to be Overcome in Order to Have a
Viable Institutional Research Program

Problem	College A		College B		College C		Total
	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	
Money	2	1		3		3	9
Time	1	1	1	1	1	3	8
Research Skills		1	2		1		4
Staff Support			2	1			3
Board Attitude		1			2		3
Defining Type of Research	1						1
No Problem	1	1					2

The requirement of sufficient financial support was mentioned by three respondents from College B and also three respondents from College C.

Time. Two respondents in College A mentioned time as the major obstacle to developing an institutional research program. One of these respondents elaborated to include the lack of competent research workers on staff, as well as the lack of available time, as being an obstacle.

In College B, two respondents mentioned lack of time as being the greatest obstacle to conducting a viable institutional research program. One of these respondents, an administrator, felt that the faculty had enough time but that administrators could use more time for this purpose.

In College C, four of ten respondents cited time as the greatest problem to be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program.

Research skills. Only one respondent from each of Colleges A and C suggested that there were not adequate researchers available to support an institutional research function. Two respondents from College B related the most necessary condition in institutional research to the man who would be responsible for the program or the nature of the job. These two respondents from College B contended that the man responsible must be autonomous, research oriented, and a good coordinator. The respondents from

Colleges A and C related the biggest problem to the nature of the job in the sense that it must be clearly understood what its function is and that it has to prove its value to those it affects. In this area it was felt that the nature of the job required the researcher to be able to convince those in the college that it needed to be done.

In College C, the difference between colleges and universities was elaborated on by one respondent. This respondent pointed out that at the university level there were a large number of relatively inexpensive research workers (i.e., graduate students) available to the faculty members, whereas this situation did not and never would exist at the college level.

Staff support. Three respondents, all from College B, expressed some doubt that the staff of the college would be willing to support an on-going institutional research function in their college.

Other obstacles. The remaining problem areas are considered under this one category because of the relatively infrequent response to each.

One respondent from College A felt that the board attitude of being against research was the biggest obstacle with the administration being somewhere in the middle.

Two respondents from College C replied that the greatest problem to be overcome was one of commitment to the basic idea of research in some form at the college

level from the college board. This was expressed by one respondent as follows: "The greatest problem (is) to get the college movement to recognize the importance of research." The other respondent expressed the problem as being one of getting "A commitment on behalf of provincial authorities that it is a particular need."

One respondent felt that the greatest obstacle was defining the type of research that should be done by the college. This was further explained as relating to which type of problem should be investigated, what the parameters of a study should be and the establishment of various priorities of studies.

Only two respondents, both from College A, could see no problems at all at the moment with conducting a viable institutional research program.

Summary. It can be concluded from the responses to this question that lack of funds and lack of time are seen by college staff members as presenting the greatest obstacles to forming a viable institutional research function in the colleges.

QUESTION 9: In your opinion is there a need, or would it be desirable to have an office of institutional research in this college?

Inspection of Table 10 shows that opinion is divided sharply on the need for an office of institutional research: in College A--opinion is against; College

B--clearly for; and College C--against, but on the borderline. In the discussion which follows, the responses for each college are considered in turn.

Table 10

The Need for a College Office
of Institutional Research

	College A		College B ^a		College C		Total
	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	
Yes		3	4	4	2	2	15
No	5	2	1		2	4	14

^aOne instructor from College B declined to reply to this question.

For College A, seven of the ten respondents replied negatively to this question. Many different reasons were given for this response. One person felt that the college had not "grown-up sufficiently yet" and the development of the college was already growing at a fast enough pace. Two other negative respondents felt that the college was not large enough to warrant its own office of institutional research but they felt that it would be of great benefit to the colleges if the system as a whole had a research office they could draw on as the need arose. Two

of the negative respondents to this question stated that, despite their views, if the service were available in their own college they would certainly make use of it. One respondent felt that even if an institutional research office were established very little would get done because of budget restrictions.

Three of ten respondents felt that an office of institutional research would be beneficial for College A. These three persons held instructional positions in the college. One of these respondents felt that if it were not a formal office of institutional research at least someone should have part of their duties assigned to perform this function in the college.

In College B, eight of ten respondents replied that they felt the college should have an office of institutional research. Three of these respondents felt that in a sense an institutional research function was now being performed at the college; however, it was split between the office of Research and Development and the division of Community and Student Services. Institutional problems which related to the students or the college and the community were handled by Community and Student Services whereas other problems, such as those dealing with instruction, were handled by the office of Research and Development.

One respondent felt that if each division had a research and development function which was coordinated

and supplemented by an office of institutional research, the college would benefit greatly. It was further suggested by this person that all of the community colleges would benefit by a clearing-house of Canadian college research much as exists in the United States.

One person replied in the negative to this question--he could not support a formalized office of institutional research unless it could be justified in terms of future growth. The final respondent from College B declined to give a reply to this question because there were too many qualifications to be made.

In College C, six of the ten respondents replied negatively to this question. Generally it was felt by these respondents that the college was not large enough to justify an office devoted solely to institutional research. Rather, it was felt that the college would be better served if institutional research were delegated as a part of some administrative officer's duties. Two of these respondents suggested that the Colleges Commission should set up an office of institutional research which all of the colleges could utilize as the need arose.

Four of ten respondents in College C replied that the college should have an office of institutional research. One of these four affirmative answers was qualified with a statement to the effect that he felt it would operate more efficiently if it had to report to no other authority but the governing body of the college.

The first impression from these data was that no distinct need for an office of institutional research was expressed. Further analysis, however, presented alternative provision for meeting the need which was expressed. Colleges A and C respondents generally felt that no need existed for an office of institutional research for their colleges. College B respondents expressed the need for such an office; this could possibly stem from the larger size of the college. Question 9 was further supplemented by Question 10.

QUESTION 10: How do you feel would be the best way to organize an institutional research function in this college?

This question was designed to supplement the responses given in Question 9. In many cases respondents could not add further to the replies they had given in the previous question. Those who could not elaborate are omitted from the discussion following Table 11.

In College A, comments which elaborated on previous answers dealt with the person who would operate the office or to whom the office should be responsible. One respondent felt the office should be responsible only to a committee of college faculty. Another respondent felt that the office of institutional research, if there were to be one, should be completely independent of the faculty association board, or general administration. Two respondents mentioned

that institutional research should be a responsibility of divisions.

Table 11

Organization of the Office of
Institutional Research

Responsible To	College A		College B		College C		Total
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	
President and Board			2		1	2	5
Responsibility of Divisions	1	1	2			1	5
Responsible to a Committee		1			1	2	4
Completely Independent		1		1			2
Couldn't Elaborate	4	2	1	4	2	1	14

In College B, one respondent replied that the institutional research office would operate more efficiently if it were independent of any group or other office in the college. Two respondents felt that it should be an appendage of the president's office and answerable only to him. There were also two respondents from this college who felt that institutional research should be a divisional

responsibility.

In College C, two respondents suggested that the office of institutional research should be established as a service area which would be responsible to a committee of the administrative officers of the college. An instructor replied that it could be run through the Professional Growth Committee. This committee, which was made up of instructors and administrators in the college, coordinated professional seminars and administered funds for staff members to attend professional meetings within their particular disciplines. Three respondents suggested that this function could best be organized and administered as an appendage of the president's office and the board. One other respondent felt that if the division heads were given an administrative assistant and more clerical help, they would be able to accomplish much of the work that an office of institutional research could do.

Those respondents who did elaborate in this question tended to feel that institutional research should be a division responsibility or if there were to be an office of institutional research it should be responsible to the president and board or to a faculty committee.

QUESTION 11: How would you summarize the role of institutional research in your community college?

Three of the respondents from College A stated that

at the moment institutional research had "no impact," that it was "uncoordinated and haphazard," or that at present "there is no role." Two other respondents added under this question that if institutional research can be shown to benefit the student they would support it. Another felt that some institutional research function was necessary if the college was to solve its problems or remain up-to-date. Three other respondents felt that the future role of institutional research could be quite important in College A if it solved academic problems, operations problems, or if it aided the general administration of the college.

In College B, of those respondents who were able to elaborate on this question, at least two felt that at present institutional research was a "non-role" in their college. The preferred future role of institutional research was seen by two others as being independent; not a servant of the administration but rather an aid of administration. The idea that this research function should "be flexible so it can incorporate both academic and non-academic needs" was expressed. The role of institutional research was felt by some to be a growing one and that in the future it would be a more important function than at present.

In College C the role of institutional research at present was seen by four respondents, as "haphazard," "hit and miss," "trial and error" and "nonexistent." Three

respondents could see a future role for this type of research as facilitating planning in the college, evaluating decisions that had been made and, in general, being a very definite asset to the college. At least one respondent felt that institutional research should be conducted mainly during the intersession period by all of the staff rather than being a function which was performed throughout the college year.

A summary of the comments made in reference to the role of institutional research indicates that, at the present time, this role is relatively minor in the colleges. Although a minor role at present, comments indicate that in future this role will be more significant.

SUMMARY

There were many problems in areas such as curriculum and instruction, student studies and staff studies found in all three of the colleges involved in this study for which the respondents felt institutional research might help provide answers. It was also felt by the majority of the respondents that extensive institutional research was not being done. The research that was being done was done in addition to the regular work loads of staff members in most cases. Three respondents replied that it was a part of their regular duties to conduct studies of an institutional research nature.

The largest amount of institutional research was

being conducted at College B, the institution involved about equally in career and transfer programs. This was also the largest college involved in the study.

Money and time were most often cited by the respondents in all colleges as being the greatest problem which must be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program in the colleges.

College A respondents were seventy percent against the establishment of a formal office of institutional research in their college; College C was sixty percent against. College B was eighty percent in favor of the establishment of a formal office of institutional research in the college. Six respondents from College C and one from College A felt that it would be more appropriate for some staff officer to be given, as part of his regular duties, the task of coordinating the required institutional research function in their college. The alternative suggestion was made that it would be of benefit to many of the colleges in the Alberta system to have a provincial office of institutional research, possibly under the auspices of the Colleges Commission, on which the colleges could draw as the need arose.

Although most respondents were aware of at least one institutional research study, in none of the three colleges did a formal institutional research office exist. The need for some form of formalized institutional research function was seen by all respondents.

Many of those respondents who were against the establishment of an office of institutional research in their colleges suggested alternate means of coordinating this function. An overall impression from this investigation therefore, was that a person or office must be given the responsibility for coordinating an institutional research function in the colleges.

Chapter 5

CONTENT RESEARCH

This chapter analyses the results received in response to the eleven questions which related to content research. As the reader will recall, the expression content research has been coined in this study to denote research which relates to a discipline or other subject matter taught in the college. Content research should be understood to cover such differing kinds of activity as basic and applied research in a teaching discipline, as well as research relating to the teaching of that discipline.

The reader may have discerned possible overlap in the area of curriculum and instruction between institutional research and content research. Institutional research in this study has been defined as research undertaken at the initiative of the institution--through whatever decision-making mechanisms the institution establishes for this purpose--and is directed toward solving institutional problems and achieving institutional goals. Content research, on the other hand, is research which is undertaken by the instructor at his own initiative which relates to some problem in his discipline. Thus, given the circumstances of the inquiry on curriculum and

instruction, it may have application in either institutional research or content research.

The questions are dealt with one at a time as they relate to each of the three colleges involved in the study.

Before the respondent was asked to continue the interview, reference was again made to the preliminary statement which distinguished content research from institution research. Once the nature of the research component now being discussed was understood between the interviewer and respondent, the interview continued.

QUESTION 1: To what extent does your college encourage or discourage staff members to engage in research in their fields of teaching specialization?

This question was designed to have the respondent begin to think of content research and to get some initial reaction as to the status of this research component in the college. Inspection of Table 12 shows that the colleges tended to encourage more than discourage content research.

Seven of ten respondents in College A felt that there was neither official encouragement or discouragement by the college for content research. In elaborating on this question one of these respondents thought that the teaching load itself tended to be discouraging; however, "you are not prohibited." He concluded that the college

atmosphere, because of its emphasis on teaching, was not conducive to content research.

Table 12
College Encouragement or Discouragement
of Content Research

	College A	College B	College C	Total			
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Total
Encourages	1	1	4	2	3		11
Discourages		1				2	3
Neither	3	4	1	3	2	3	16

Two respondents in College A felt that the college encouraged content research. One of these respondents, an administrator, elaborated to say that you would be encouraged providing there was a sound basis for what you wanted to do.

The remaining respondent from College A, also an administrator, felt that the college actively discouraged staff from taking part in content research because the college was first and foremost a teaching institution.

In College B, six of ten respondents replied that their college actively encouraged content research especially of the action or applied type. Others in this

group elaborated to say that the encouragement had increased in the last six months, especially towards the improvement of instruction within a discipline, because of a pending move by the college to a new campus.

The remaining four respondents from this college felt that there was neither encouragement nor discouragement to conduct content research.

In College C, five of the respondents felt that the college neither encouraged nor discouraged content research. Some of the elaborations given to this question by this group included comments to the effect that, "you can do research if you wish; however, no official time is given for research nor are funds provided." Others mentioned that most staff members are kept busy by regular duties and one felt that there may be a time in the future when content research will be actively encouraged.

Two respondents from College C stated that content research is actively discouraged because no funds were made available for the purpose.

Three respondents from College C felt that content research was actively encouraged by the college because no restraints whatsoever are placed on staff during the intersession period. It was also felt by one member of this group that the sabbatical leave policy of the college was a strong incentive to staff members to engage in some form of content research.

In summary, it can be deduced from these replies

that in most instances the colleges neither encourage nor discourage content research. However, it was felt by approximately one third of the respondents that there was more encouragement than discouragement.

QUESTION 2: How does college policy on content research affect the work of members of the instructional/administrative staff?

This question was designed to supplement the responses given in Question 1. The general reaction to this question was that no policy on content research existed. Furthermore, many respondents felt that their work was not affected.

In College A, seven of ten respondents felt that no formal policy existed in the college. One respondent replied that this was a "nothing policy" and that most staff were not interested.

The remaining three respondents in College A thought that the college policy would be to treat each case individually and that providing the content research project did not interfere with the teaching function of the college, college policy would not hinder and possibly even aid content research.

In College B, four respondents felt that no policy existed and therefore there was no effect on work that they could discern.

Six other respondents, four of them administrators,

thought that college policy greatly encouraged content research and therefore a lot of work by both instructional and administrative staff was being done in this area. Mentioned by these respondents was the fact that instructors' contracts allowed for twenty percent of all their time for research activities and therefore a considerable amount of content research was being done, especially in relation to instructional procedures within the disciplines.

One respondent from College B thought that this was a very unhappy question in that the work of staff members was being adversely affected because they were expected by the administration not only to teach but to do content research in their areas. This respondent felt that the load was just too great and the quality of both teaching and research was affected as a result.

In College C, six of ten respondents felt that college policy adversely affected the work of staff members because little or no provision was made in policy for research. Mentioned among the reasons for feeling this way were the following: the absence of time and money prevented research being done within disciplines that some instructors felt was necessary, the best qualified people were not always appointed to college jobs, and the fact that staff members are not allowed to accept outside financial aid to conduct content research.

Three of the respondents in College C felt that

there was no real policy in existence on the matter and, therefore, it had no real effect on the work of staff members.

One respondent felt that college policy actively supported content research and, therefore, if anything the work of staff members benefits as a result.

In summary, it can be seen that almost half (fourteen) of the respondents felt that no policy existed concerning content research and, therefore, their work was not affected. Approximately one third of the respondents felt that their work benefited from college policy on content research.

QUESTION 3: Can you see any need for content research at the college level?

As the reader will note in Table 13, a great majority of the respondents in this study felt that a need definitely existed for content research at the college level.

In College A, six of the ten respondents replied in the affirmative to this question. Five of these six offered qualifications to this, however, by stating that only certain kinds of content research (i.e., applied or action research as opposed to more basic or pure research) should be done and that it should be kept in mind that colleges are primarily teaching institutions. Others in this group felt that some content research was

necessary to keep in touch with developments in an instructor's particular discipline.

Table 13

The Need for Content Research at
the College Level

	College A		College B		College C		Total
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Total
Yes	3	3	5	5	4	6	26
No		1					1
Couldn't say	2	1					3

Three respondents from College A would not comment on this question other than to say that there should be less research and more teaching at the college level. No reason was apparent for only respondents from College A replying this way. One person responded "no" to this question and added that the university is the place for content research.

All of the ten respondents from College B answered in the affirmative to Question 3. Although some felt more strongly in favor of content research in their college than others, all felt that in some degree content research should be a part of the college environment. In

elaborating on this question ideas such as, "it is intrinsic to instructor and instruction"--and "you must, knowledge does not stand still," were expressed. At least one respondent added here that the content research component of the colleges must never be permitted to develop into the "publish or perish" type of research.

As with College B, all of the respondents in College C supported a content research function at the college level. Again there were varying degrees of support for this function. Two respondents specified that content research was definitely a second priority to the teaching function of the college. The reasons given for supporting a content research function by the respondents in College C were similar to those given previously: namely, that it is essential that an instructor remain abreast of developments in his field and that he continually adapt these developments to the college situation.

In summary, the conclusion can be drawn from these replies that there is wide support in the colleges for content research, subject to the qualifications outlined in the discussion above.

QUESTION 4: What do you feel would be the greatest problem with conducting content research at your college?

Inspection of Table 14 shows that the most common problem felt to exist in carrying out content research is

the lack of time. Many respondents felt that if they just had more time freed from other duties they would be able to involve themselves in some form of content research.

The various problems identified by respondents are discussed below, in order of frequency-of-mention.

Table 14

The Greatest Problem with Conducting
Content Research

Problem	College A		College B		College C		Total
	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	
Time	3	2	1	2	1	1	10
Research Skills	2	1	1	1			5
Research Restrictions			1		1	3	5
Facilities					2	2	4
Money		1	1				2
Students Neglected		1					1
No Problems			1	2			3

Time. In College A, five respondents cited lack of time as being the greatest obstacle to carrying out content research. The only way instructors would be able to get involved with content research would be to lighten

their work load in other areas.

Time was also mentioned as being the biggest problem with conducting content research by three respondents in College B and two in College C.

Research skills. Three respondents from College A, two of them administrators, mentioned the fact that the staff at colleges are not adequately trained for conducting content research in their disciplines. Two respondents from College B also mentioned the lack of staff expertise in research and one also mentioned the fact that there were no graduate students, as in the universities, who would be able to offer assistance in the colleges.

Institutional restrictions. One respondent from College B felt that the institution would put too narrowing limits on the content research that could be done. It was felt that these limits would rule out more pure or basic research in a discipline.

Four comments from respondents in College C referred to statements of philosophy which they felt would be the greatest hindrance to conducting content research at the college level. An example was the concept held by some people that, "Ph.D.'s were good forever and ever," an attitude which the respondent felt must be overcome so that the Ph.D. would feel obliged to be involved on a continuing basis with content research. Two others felt that too much outside control in the form of

delineating areas of study and resources permitted would be exerted on their research efforts, both by the college administration and the Colleges Commission. One respondent in this area felt that it would be necessary to get rid of educational administrators in the college administration and put in what he referred to as "more pure academics" who could understand the problems involved with research in the various disciplines.

Other obstacles. The lack of proper facilities was mentioned by four respondents in College C as being the greatest problem facing staff members who wish to conduct content research at their college.

Only two respondents, one from College A and one from College B, cited money as being a problem with conducting content research.

One respondent in the study mentioned that the students might suffer if staff members were to become involved in content research. This, however, could more properly be referred to as a negative outcome rather than an obstacle akin to those previously mentioned.

Only three respondents, all from College B, felt that no barriers existed to conducting content research.

In summary, the response to Question 4 would indicate that a lack of time is the major problem in conducting content research in the colleges.

QUESTION 5: In your opinion, are there some disciplines which can justify content research more than others?

Data summarizing the responses to Question 5 are presented in Table 15. These data are considered, college by college, in the discussion below.

Table 15

Respondents' Opinions on Justifying Content Research
More in Some Areas Over Others

	College A Adminis- trator	College B In- structor	College C Adminis- trator	College C In- structor	Total
Yes	3	4	3	3	17
No	2	1	2	3	11
Don't know	.	.	2	.	2

In College A, three respondents suggested that there was no real justification for content research having higher priority in some disciplines over others. The remaining seven suggested areas which could justify content research more than other disciplines. Four respondents felt that various sciences could claim a higher priority for content research. The three remaining respondents suggested the following as priority research

areas: Outdoor Recreation, Nursing, and Technical-Vocational Education. These areas were mentioned because it was felt that knowledge was rapidly changing in these fields.

In College B, five of ten respondents replied that in their opinion no one discipline can justify content research more than others. This group believed that the emphasis of the various disciplines may differ but that they all had a case to make to support research in their fields.

Two other respondents in College B felt that certain disciplines could justify content research more than others. One of these respondents referred to career programs, which he felt were changing so rapidly that they required more research than transfer programs which tended to remain the same. The other respondent here felt that if the discipline were one in which a life could be involved if a mistake were made--and he gave the examples here of engineering or nursing--then these areas could claim a higher priority for content research.

The final respondent from College B, giving an affirmative answer, felt that the community college should not support content research per se but rather it should support more pedagogical research.

The remaining two College B respondents were unable to make a statement relating to this question. They felt that they just did not know.

In College C, three respondents thought that there

was no basic difference in the content research requirements of the various disciplines and, therefore, they all have an equal case to make in support of their area.

The remaining seven respondents felt that some areas warranted a higher priority for content research over other areas. This group generally felt that the sciences had a better case to make than the humanities. Most frequently mentioned were the biological sciences, including forestry and ecological studies. These sciences were referred to by one respondent as those that were involved in a knowledge explosion; the examples given here being biology, ecology and chemistry.

The respondents generally felt that all disciplines had some case to make in support of content research in their particular fields. However, where replies were given that certain areas could justify research more, these areas tended to be the biological or physical sciences.

QUESTION 6: Are you aware of any content research that is being conducted at this college?

The data summarizing the responses to Question 6 are presented in Table 16. The reader will note that a substantial minority of respondents (twelve out of thirty) were unaware of any content research being conducted at their institutions; indeed, a majority of College A respondents had no knowledge of such studies being undertaken.

Seven College A respondents said they were unaware of any content research being done at their college. The remaining three respondents mentioned one content research project which was conducted by a staff member about one year previous. Other than the one example, which was given by all three respondents, they were unaware of anything that was being done currently that could be considered content research.

Table 16

Respondents' Awareness of Content Research
Being Conducted at their College

	College A	College B	College C	Total			
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	
Aware	2	1	4	3	4	4	18
Unaware	3	4	1	2		2	12

From College B, three respondents were unaware of any content research being done at their college; however, each felt that there quite likely could be such research going on without their having knowledge of it.

The other seven respondents from this college were all aware of at least one project which they felt could be considered content research. Some of those

examples mentioned were studies in linguistics, history, student reading skills, and students as tutors. Because these were being done by individuals in their own areas and at their own initiative, they felt these to be content research. One respondent, an administrator, mentioned that all of the staff should be involved in some form of content research in their particular areas because it was required of them by the college.

Eight of the College C respondents mentioned that they were aware of some small research projects going on in their college. The examples given by this group related to the disciplines of biology and chemistry. The remaining two respondents from College C were not aware of any content research being conducted at their college.

Most respondents in this study were aware of some form of content research being conducted in their college. More instructors (eight out of sixteen) appeared to be unaware than were administrators (four out of fourteen).

QUESTION 7: Is any sort of provision being made by the college to support content research?

The data summarizing Question 7 are presented in Table 17. The replies to this question, which were mixed, are discussed by college.

Four respondents from College A replied that the college makes no provision to aid content research. Six respondents felt that each case was treated separately

and that in some instances provision of time and money in some limited way could be made.

Table 17

Provision Being Made by the College
to Support Content Research

	College A	College B	College C	Total			
	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	
No Provision	2	2	3	2	5	14	
Some Provision	3	3	5	2	2	1	16

Three of ten respondents from College B were not aware of any provision being made by the college to support content research.

The remaining seven respondents pointed out that the contracts of the instructors allowed for three hours per week for each person to devote to research--which, although prompted by the college's move to a new campus, could, nevertheless, be viewed as a provision in support of content research. Other than that they tended to feel that money and facilities were not generally available for this purpose.

Seven of ten respondents from College C tended to feel that the college made no provision to support content

research. One exception was mentioned by this group in that one staff member had received some very limited space in which to conduct some experiments in biology. The attitude generally was that you had to "steal time, space and equipment."

The other three respondents felt that the college was making a contribution to support projects which may be considered content research, especially through the Professional Growth Committee. This Committee administered a fund which provided for travel grants for staff members to attend such events as meetings between professionals within disciplines. Furthermore, a proposal was now before this Committee to support small research projects; this had yet to be put into effect.

In summary, those respondents who felt that some provision was being made in their college to support content research, felt that this provision came into effect only if one could make a case in support of a particular project. This provision was not felt to exist on a regular basis.

QUESTION 8: Who do you feel should make the decision on whether or not content research should be conducted at your college?

The data summarizing responses to Question 8 are presented in Table 18. The discussion is by college and tends to support the instructor and department head making

the decision on content research activities.

Table 18

Respondents' Position as to Who Should Make the Decision on Content Research Activities

	College A	College B	College C	Total			
	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Adminis- trator	In- structor	Total
Administration		3		1		1	5
Department Head and Instructor	5	2	4	2	3	3	19
Faculty Committee			1	2	1	2	6

In College A, seven respondents felt that the decision as to whether or not content research was to be conducted should be decided essentially through consultation between the person who proposed the research and the director of the division to which it was related. Two of these respondents felt that if the proposed research were quite involved it may require the approval of the president. One respondent in this group felt that it should never have to go to the board for approval.

The remaining three respondents, all instructors, felt that the decision as to whether or not content research were to be conducted should always lie with the

administration. One of these respondents felt that initially approval would have to be obtained in principle from the Colleges Commission. Another of these respondents felt that approval in principle from the college board was all that should be required in order to make provision for this type of research.

In College B, six respondents replied that the decision as to whether content research should be conducted should rest with the individual who conducts the research in consultation with the division chairman.

Two respondents felt that after the college board had given approval in principle for content research, then a faculty committee should be able to decide on projects.

One respondent suggested that an inter-disciplinary board should be established to decide whether a particular project should be supported. Another respondent answered indirectly that the administration would make the decision by saying that those responsible financially would make the decision.

In College C, six respondents felt that the decision on content research should be made by the individual involved in consultation with the chairman of the division.

One respondent suggested that the decision be made by a combined body of various faculty members. This would be necessary for the establishment of priority for the use of various resources in the college.

Two other respondents felt that once the Colleges Commission had given approval in principle to conduct content research, then a faculty board should administer each particular research project.

The final respondent from College C felt that the decision should come from the administration and the college board in consultation.

Most respondents tended to feel that the decision on content research activities should be made by those who would be directly involved in the study, that is, the instructor in consultation with the department head. These respondents acknowledged that the overall policy decision however, rested with the administration.

QUESTION 9: Do you feel that content research would interfere with the teaching function of the college?

The responses to Question 9 are summarized in Table 19. It can be noted that a majority of respondents felt that content research would not interfere with teaching.

Four respondents from College A felt that content research would not interfere with the teaching function of the college but rather that it would complement it.

Five respondents felt there was the possibility that content research would interfere with the teaching function, unless the research function was closely controlled. If the research were too extensive it could

interfere. With the present teaching load, these respondents felt, it would most likely interfere.

Table 19

Respondent's Impressions as to whether Content
Research Would Interfere with the Teaching
Function of the College

	College A	College B	College C	Total			
	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Administrator	Instructor	Total
Would Not Interfere	2	2	3	2	3	5	17
Could Interfere	3	2	1	2	1	1	10
Don't Know		1	1	1			3

The tenth respondent from College A could not answer this question directly. He felt that the possibility existed either way--content research might aid the teaching function or it might hurt it.

In College B, five respondents answered that content research would facilitate the teaching function. Three others felt that there was the possibility that it would interfere. The remaining two respondents felt that it may or may not interfere with the teaching function and that it would depend upon the instructor and on the scale of the research being done.

In College C, eight of ten respondents stated that content research would not interfere with the teaching function of the college; rather, it would most likely enhance it.

The remaining two respondents from College C felt that there was a danger that content research would interfere with the teaching function of the college.

The majority of respondents in this study felt that content research would not interfere with the teaching function of the college; rather, that it would complement it. Of those respondents who felt that it could interfere, most were prepared to see content research conducted in their college providing that adequate controls were maintained to ensure that it did not interfere with the teaching function.

QUESTION 10: Do you concur with the view that community colleges are primarily teaching institutions?

Table 20 summarizes the replies received to Question 10. It can be noted that all respondents replied in an identical manner.

From all colleges there were ten strongly affirmative answers to this question. These responses appeared to stem from a feeling on the part of the respondents towards providing a unique service to their students and were not given just because they felt it was the proper thing to say.

Table 20

Respondents' Impressions as to Whether or Not the
College is Primarily a Teaching Institution

	College A	College B	College C
Yes	10	10	10
No

QUESTION 11: How would you summarize the role of content research in this community college?

In this question the respondent was asked to discuss the role of content research as he saw it in the present or to relate the question to the future role as he envisioned it.

Three respondents from College A mentioned that the role of content research in their college is at the moment relatively non-existent. Two of these respondents could see little in the way of a future role for content research. The other respondent felt that content research would be a growing factor on their campus.

Five respondents from College A felt that although the role of content research was subordinate at the moment, it would become increasingly important in the future.

One respondent from College A felt that content research does not help serve the purpose of the college. The tenth respondent from this college was unable to offer a response to this question.

In College B, seven of ten respondents replied to this question to the effect that although the role of content research at the moment was not that great, it had the potential of being very significant especially in the area of improving curriculum in the various disciplines. One respondent put it this way: "The basic rationale for content research in a community college should be to improve your ability to communicate the proper knowledge and better."

The three remaining respondents in College B felt that content research was essentially non-existent by design, that there was very little being done and that it was a low priority function in the college.

In College C, there was a high degree of consistency among the summary statements on content research in the college. The fact that content research had a relatively insignificant role at the present was recognized along with the idea that while remaining true to the teaching function of the college, content research could be very beneficial. The ideas were expressed that, "people coming and just teaching were completely passé," and that content research "should be here to a limited extent."

In summary, the replies to Question 11 indicate that the role of content research in the community colleges is a minor one at present. It was generally felt that the potential for content research in the colleges was great and that it would have a greater role in the

future as a supportive function to teaching.

SUMMARY QUESTION: Do you have any further comments which you may feel would be relevant to a study of this nature?

The interview concluded with this question, designed to be a catch-all to allow for any statements the respondents wished to make which he felt had been overlooked in the earlier part of the interview.

In College A, four respondents had no further comments to add. The remaining six respondents added comments which tended to re-cap their earlier statements. One respondent mentioned that he felt a communication gap existed between the colleges and the Colleges Commission and within the college between the administration and staff.

For College B, all of the respondents offered a concluding statement in reference to this question. Essentially these statements were a re-cap of ideas that had been expressed earlier. One idea that was expressed by two different respondents was the feeling that the Colleges Commission should set down guidelines for the overall research function in the colleges. It was also expressed that a provincial or even national clearinghouse on research would be beneficial to the individual colleges. The idea that a communication gap existed between the colleges was expressed by respondents in College B.

In College C, five respondents had nothing more to add to the statements that had already been made. Of the five who offered statements to this question, three re-capped their earlier comments. The other statements referred to the need for "more inter-college cooperation" in the area of research.

SUMMARY

Most of the respondents from Colleges A and C felt that they were neither encouraged nor discouraged from conducting content research. The encouragement felt in College B was due to the staff contracts which allowed for three hours of research per week.

No formal policy on content research existed in the colleges. The work of staff members was not affected by a policy which did not exist.

The need for some degree of content research was seen by a majority of the respondents in the study. Both Colleges B and C had unanimous support for content research, while six of ten respondents from College A supported this type of research in the college.

The greatest problem seen with conducting content research in the colleges was a lack of time for such purposes. In general, it was felt by the respondents that all disciplines could justify some degree of content research: however, many respondents did elaborate to suggest that some disciplines, especially those areas which

were experiencing a "knowledge explosion" could possibly offer a greater justification.

The amount of content research being conducted in the colleges was minimal. Most of the respondents from College A were unaware of any content research being conducted in their college. In Colleges B and C most of the respondents were aware of some limited form of content research being conducted.

A majority of respondents in this study felt that policy decisions on content research should be made by the administrations, whereas decisions concerning individual projects should be made by instructors and department heads in consultation.

All thirty respondents from the three colleges involved in this study concurred with the view that the colleges are primarily teaching institutions.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A summary of this study is presented in this chapter. Conclusions are drawn from its findings, and suggestions are presented for further research.

SUMMARY OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of this study was to develop a description or profile of the research component in Alberta's public community colleges.

For the purpose of this study the concept of research was divided into two major sections, institutional research and content research. Institutional research refers to the studies conducted by an institution in order to facilitate the solving of problems for that institution. Content research refers to the investigations that an instructor would conduct which are of a disciplinary nature.

The data were gathered for this study by the semi-structured interview technique. Use of semi-structured interviews made it possible to obtain in-depth answers to questions and permitted the interviewer to get at the reasons behind responses.

An interview schedule was developed which had

eleven questions in each of the two sections. A follow-up question was added to the schedule to allow for elaboration on any points which the respondent may have felt were overlooked earlier in the interview.

Three Alberta colleges took part in this study. College A was a career-oriented college, College B had a mixture of career and transfer programs, and College C was essentially a transfer-oriented college.

The sample consisted of ten respondents from each college for a total of thirty. An attempt was made to have a mixture of administrators and instructors from as many divisions as possible within each college represented in the sample.

The respondents' replies were recorded on the interview schedules by the interviewer. The average time for the thirty interviews was fifty-seven minutes.

The results were analysed question-by-question in Chapters 4 and 5. In most questions the responses were discussed college-by-college. In some questions--for example, those dealing with problem areas--the responses were discussed by issue, according to the overall frequency of mention.

Some problems were encountered in precisely categorizing the various responses, especially in questions which called for a single response. For example, if both lack of funds and time were expressed when a respondent was asked for the greatest problem faced in conducting

research, the initial response was the one tabulated--on the assumption that this was the one to which he attached the most importance--and the other problem was generally given mention later in the discussion.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

In reference to institutional research, it was felt by a majority of the respondents in the study that extensive research of this nature was not being done. That which was being done tended to be conducted by staff members in addition to their regular work load. The institutional research studies that were done tended to be commissioned by the college administration. Also, a majority of the respondents saw a need for more institutional research in their colleges to help solve problems which they perceived.

Money and time were most often cited by respondents in each of the colleges as being the greatest problems which must be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program.

Most respondents suggested studies relating to objectives and goals, curriculum and instruction, and students as warranting highest priority if the necessary resources were available for institutional research.

Respondents from College A were seventy percent against, and respondents from College C were sixty percent against, the establishment of formal offices of

institutional research in their colleges. They felt that if one staff member had as a part of his regular duties the coordination of institutional research this would be sufficient. The alternate suggestion was made by two respondents that a provincial office of institutional research, possibly coordinated by the Colleges Commission, would be of benefit to all of Alberta's public community colleges.

Respondents from College B were eighty percent in favor of the establishment of such an office in their college.

A summary of the comments made in reference to the role of institutional research indicate that this role is relatively minor in the colleges. Although a minor role at present, comments indicate that in future this role will be more significant.

In reference to content research, most of the respondents from Colleges A and C felt that they were neither encouraged nor discouraged from conducting content research, whereas, most respondents from College B felt that they were encouraged to conduct content research in their particular disciplines.

No formal policy on content research was found to exist in the colleges. Most respondents felt that their work was not affected by a policy which did not exist.

The need for some degree of content research in Alberta's public community colleges was seen by a majority

of respondents in the study.

The lack of time was the major obstacle seen by respondents to conducting content research in the colleges. The lack of adequate researchers and the restrictions that would be placed on their research activities were the next most often mentioned barriers to conducting content research.

It was felt that all disciplines had a case to make in support of research in their fields; however, many respondents also felt that the areas which were experiencing a "knowledge explosion" could better justify content research activities.

The amount of content research being conducted in Alberta's public community colleges was minimal.

Almost half (fourteen) of the respondents felt that no provision was being made in the colleges to support content research. The remaining respondents tended to feel that support given for content research was minimal, with each case being considered separately.

Most respondents felt that the overall policy on content research should be made by the administration and decisions concerning individual research projects should be made by the instructor and the department head in consultation.

Most respondents felt that content research would not interfere with the teaching function of the college. All thirty respondents involved in this study concurred

with the view that the colleges are primarily teaching institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

Two different kinds of conclusions may be drawn from a study of this kind: descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptive conclusions are those which arise directly out of the data analysis. Prescriptive conclusions also arise from the data analysis; to formulate such a conclusion, however, it is necessary to state certain assumptions which make possible conclusions which extend beyond descriptive statements to include recommendations for policy and action.

From the findings of this study, the following descriptive conclusions may be drawn:

1. A lack of time and money are the greatest problems to be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research function in the colleges.

2. In the view of most respondents in this study there is not a need for a formalized office of institutional research in each college in the Alberta college system. College B respondents tended to differ on this point.

3. Respondents felt that content research is generally not encouraged in Alberta's public community colleges.

4. Inspection of Tables 3 and 16 illustrate that instructors are much less aware of research activities

in their colleges than are administrators.

5. Respondents felt that a lack of time is the biggest problem to be overcome in order to have a greater degree of content research in the colleges.

6. Respondents report that all disciplines can make a legitimate case for carrying out some degree of content research. However, areas involved in a knowledge explosion, such as biology and chemistry or areas such as engineering or nursing could possibly justify content research more easily than others.

7. Respondents felt that the amount of content research being conducted in Alberta's public community colleges is minimal.

8. All of the respondents in this study felt that the colleges are primarily teaching institutions; furthermore, all respondents felt that nothing should be permitted to interfere with this function.

The following prescriptive conclusions may be drawn from this study:

1. Based on the response to questions in this study which suggested areas requiring research and the assumption that the respondents are in positions to recognize various problems, there is a need for more research of an institutional nature in Alberta's public community colleges.

2. A study should be done on the methods of organizing an institutional research function for the college system as a whole.

3. Table 13 indicated that only one respondent in the study could see no need for content research at the college level. With the qualification that nothing should interfere with the teaching function of the colleges, there is a greater need for content research in the colleges.

4. Some method of meeting the need demonstrated for content research which will aid the teaching function should be devised.

5. The administration of the various colleges in conjunction with the Colleges Commission should develop a written policy on research as a guide to staff.

6. One final point should be mentioned in conclusion which is unsubstantiated by extensive reference made in the analysis of data. There appeared, throughout the colleges included in this study, to be a communication gap both within and between the colleges. As a specific example, inspection of Tables 3 and 16 illustrate that instructors are much less aware of research being conducted in their colleges than are administrators. A method should be devised for improving within and between college communication.

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APPENDIX A

COLLEGE RESEARCH STUDY

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interviewer: Raymond M. Olson

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

The purpose of this study, as you know, has to do with research in Alberta's public community colleges. There are two main aspects that I'm interested in; these have to do with institutional research and what can be referred to as content research. Institutional research indicates research that is done by an institution to aid it in solving its problems. Content research on the other hand, is research done by an instructor in the subject matter of his discipline. If you like, possibly I could begin getting your opinions on these topics.

Interviewee: _____

Position: _____

College: _____

Date: _____ Start: _____ Finish: _____

A. INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

1. What kinds of problems or issues do you encounter in your work at the college for which research studies might help provide answers?

2. Can you give examples of any such problem-solving studies that have been carried out in recent years? (Say, 5 years--Ask if I could possibly receive a copy of any reports that may have resulted.)

3. How were these studies carried out? (Outside researcher, Colleges Commission, staff members)

4. In the studies carried out by the college staff, has it been the practice for staff members to be given time for this purpose or is it done in addition to

their regular work load?

5. For the studies mentioned above, who generally commissions such studies? (College president, Senior administrative staff, College Council, Department chairmen, staff association)

6. If the necessary resources were available, what in your opinion would be the highest priority areas for study?

7. Do you feel that the college should study other areas which may be of concern but possibly not as high priority? (Comment and elaborate please)

- a) Students? _____
-
-
-

b) Faculty? _____

c) Finance? _____

d) Planning (e.g., program needs)? _____

e) Improved instructional procedures? _____

8. What in your opinion is the greatest problem that must be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program? (For example, is there sufficient staff support, financial support, facilities available or competent research workers available?)

9. In your opinion is there a need, or would it be desirable to have an office of institutional research in this college?

10. How do you feel would be the best way to organize an institutional research function in this college?

11. How would you summarize the role of institutional research in your community college?

B. CONTENT RESEARCH

1. To what extent does your college encourage or discourage staff members to engage in research in their fields of teaching specialization?

2. How does college policy on content research affect the work of members of the instructional/administrative staff? (Relate this question to the function of the person being interviewed)

3. Can you see any need for content research at the college level?

4. What do you feel would be the greatest problem with conducting content research at your college?

-
-
-
5. In your opinion, are there some disciplines which can justify content research more than others? (Ask respondent to elaborate if he could)
-
-
-

-
6. Are you aware of any content research that is being conducted at theis college?
-
-
-

-
7. Is any sort of provision being made by the college to support content research? (Time, money, facilities, personnel)
-
-
-

-
8. Who do you feel should make the decision on whether or not content research should be conducted at your college?

9. Do you feel that content research would interfere with the teaching function of the college?

10. Do you concur with the view that community colleges are primarily teaching institutions?

11. How would you summarize the role of content research in this community college?

Do you have any further comments which you may feel would be relevant to a study of this nature?

APPENDIX B



817B

General Services Bldg.

January 7, 1972

President

Community College

Dear Sir:

I am writing to you in connection with a research study entitled "College Research and Alberta's Public Community Colleges." This is a research topic of interest to the Alberta Colleges Commission which I am conducting in partial fulfilment of the M.Ed. degree.

In order to successfully complete this study it will be necessary, with your permission, to interview approximately ten members of your college. Please find enclosed a list which tentatively suggests those to be interviewed, as well as copies of my interview schedule.

I would like to visit your campus on _____.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Raymond M. Olson



President

Community College

Dear Sir:

I wish to express my thanks to you and your staff
who aided my survey in your College.

All assistance was much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Raymond M. Olson

APPENDIX C

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW

This transcript documents as accurately as possible one of the interviews conducted for this study. The letter "I" precedes comments by the interviewer, the letter "R" comments by the respondent.

I. The questions that I go through are broken into two different sections, the first section dealing primarily with institutional research, the problem solving sorts of studies, the second section being content research, the type of thing that an instructor may do in his discipline in order to say help his classroom function, or possibly even extend knowledge in his field. If you have no more questions, maybe I will start firing these at you and see what happens.

What kinds of problems or issues do you encounter in your work at the college, for which research studies might provide answers?

R. I think that the recurring one is of course at the end of every semester, with the registration, in order to, you know, make it more efficient and effective. Coupled with that our recurring studies of an analysis of our success rate of students in relation, drop-outs as well as distribution of grades. The biggest problem, the problem for which I am most unsympathetic to is a research needed

for collective bargaining. And then the constant problem, that you've already met of course, is our continuing assessment of the educational needs in the community.

I. Possibly some of these questions may seem a little redundant and this is that as we get into in-depth answers in earlier questions, the other ones would have been already answered.

Can you give any specific example of a problem solving study that has been just completed or say was completed in the last year or two, aside from the ones that you have mentioned?

R. Well, I think that the study for the new campus at _____, would be the outstanding one in relationship to the re-organization and style of the structure.

I. How were these studies carried out? Are they outside researchers, staff members?

R. No, by staff members primarily, we had an outside researcher for the new campus, an educational consultant, but he just gave us the broad outlines, the research and implementation of basic components was done by the staff.

I. In the studies carried out by the college staff, has it been the practice for staff members to be given time for this work?

R. It was until the Colleges Commission objected. We'd give them release time and sometimes we would also give them extra compensation because there were a few times that they would work through the summer and go up there

at holiday time. Now it is part of their work load.

I. For these studies mentioned who normally commissions them? Does this originate with yourself, or administrative staff?

R. I would say senior administrative staff for institutional research, and a combination of administration and faculty for other types. Lots of times the only time they come and see me is if they need money.

I. If the necessary resources were available, what in your opinion would be the highest priority area for research?

R. The highest priority would be a study that is not necessarily restricted to _____, it would be to set up a study which could give us almost a monthly, if not every three months or six months, profile of the labour market in _____ and Alberta. And then the second one I think would be again not restricted to _____, it would be an analysis of the transfer situation between colleges and senior institutions.

I. This one here then is designed to get at anything that you may have missed in that particular sense. Do you feel that the college should research or study other areas which may be of concern but possibly of not as high priority as those that you have mentioned? I give examples under this particular heading, student studies, faculty studies, areas of finance, planning, improve instruction.

R. Well, I hope that there will be constant assessment

and improvement of instructional practices always.

I. I believe that there is a lot of this going on right now, because of your move. Is this right?

R. I would like to have a, well in fact it first started here under the Opportunities for Youth Program. I would like the resources to do two things. I would like to set up, to identify and set up some continuing of out of house counselling with the lower social economic groups in the city, or in the area really, in order to encourage more of them to attend, not necessarily _____, but to get in the training programs, which would improve themselves.

I. Could you think of anything in the area, say of faculty or finance that would bear study?

R. Oh, I think that, I guess _____ mentioned this and so the provincial government touched to give us some guidelines, some long range guidelines. This will always bear study. Right now we are in the problem of which comes first, the chicken or the egg, sort of thing. I think that the provincial government, and this is my American bias coming out, but I think that in education the government should set up a legislating body for education, rather than, for example, the Colleges Commission has a chairman appointed by the minister, not by its own membership. In other words, you would have, what you would call in the States an Independent Regulatory Commission, you know you have them for Federal Communications Commission,

you have them for Interstate Commerce Commission, you know, all these things. I think a study to see the feasibility of this type of thing for education would help to then formulate, these guidelines in finance and things like that. You led me into an avenue and I had another type of study, that was outside of the college, that would be helpful I think for it.

I. Something to do with the labour market again, or student oriented?

R. It has something to do with the labour market, I would like to get and be involved, this institution be involved in a municipal and provincial agency to attract new industries into the city and the province, because with the migration patterns, although _____ is growing, they are not really coming off the farms. I think we need new industry and I think that one of the things we can do to attract them is, and this has been done elsewhere in North America, if an industry could say, we are going to come in here and we need 500 people trained in this certain way, then the college could gin up and have the trained personnel, at least trained for entrance into their industry, upon the completion of their facilities.

I. What in your opinion is the greatest problem that must be overcome in order to have a viable institutional research program?

R. To find the right man with the pension plan animity. I think a research man, who can not only do research, but

who is good in coordinating research projects too. Who loves it and can stay a long time will solve a lot of problems for any institution. In other words he is happy there and of course I think a lot of programs have to be long range, and the continuity is broken up as turnover takes place. But you can't really blame a lot of people as this sort of is a dead end area, you know, unless you move out of the office into a line relationship, with a bigger institution, higher salary.

I. It is just a problem in your opinion, then of people just always wanting to work their way up, is this a part of it?

R. Yes, I think so, and I think that the more research that is done, the more he becomes acquainted, the more knowledgable he becomes with that institution, therefore, he in effect does inherit and come across a lot of ideas which I think, intrigues him and he would like to implement them. Another big problem of course, which is related to the man to a degree, that a lot of good studies are not implemented even though they are done.

I. I think this is a very common complaint, or problem.

R. Yes. Part of it because you don't find too many institutional researchers or research and development, as we call it, with very longevity.

I. This next particular question you may feel, I think possibly that this function has been filled, but in your

opinion is there a need or would it be desirable to have an office of institutional research?

R. No.

I. How do you feel would be the best way to organize this institutional research function?

R. I think that if I had to do it over again, that I would take it out of instruction and I would have it as an appendage to the President's office, rather than related to any particular function, as you know we have this institution broken down into three: instructional, student, business services, and perhaps four, community services, once we get enlarged.

I. How would you summarize the role of institutional research in your college at the moment and possibly as you see it in the years to come?

R. Right at the moment I think most of the time is devoted to the organization of instruction and although it is a very important part, I think in the future I would want to see it take on research in all of the three or four functional areas in which the college is organized. As you can appreciate the reorganization of the instructional and administration is of first priority.

I. In dealing now with the content research aspect of the community college situation, to what extent does your college encourage or discourage staff members to engage in research in their fields of teaching specialization?

R. Primarily we encourage research in the improvement of the acquisition of knowledge and improvement of instruction therein, rather than pure research. We encourage our staff to publish, one has published two books. And there is a lot of program material that this faculty is ginning up, we have had some inquiries about them being published too. It is highly related I think to the prime function of the college.

I. But you are not primarily concerned with the university attitude of publish or perish?

R. No. In fact I would resist it.

I. How does college policy, do you feel then, on this content research, affect the work of say instructional staff and administrative staff?

R. We can't say college policy per se, because you see collective bargaining. It's, I think, the biggest problem is your rationality of the policy through the bargaining process.

I. I believe you mentioned the bargaining situation or the results of it in the last section having resulted in allowed time for supposedly improving their instructional procedures.

R. Let's say that the load is fifteen hours, three of which is devoted to research and development.

I. Can you see a need for content research at the college level, generally speaking, not necessarily referring now to the specific need you have for _____?

R. Yes, as I said, I think content research will always be a part of the professional process of the instructors.

I. You will notice that this is in a sense trying to get at the same thing from a different direction. There are many instances here. What do you feel would be the greatest problem in conducting content research at your college?

R. Because this is an assumption based on the new campus style, I think most of them are predicting that content research in the future will be team effort and inter-disciplinary in nature, because this is the way I think teaching has to go, and as you know, when we get too many moving parts, too many people involved, until we get a little more rigorous discipline as they have in research in private industries, I think we are going to have problems, because I think that academic individuality based on academic freedom, is going to interfere. To illustrate, for example you know, if you are with IBM, or Westinghouse, and they say we have a problem in lasers, why then that is where you work. But if you get three scientists in the academic setting, they could argue endlessly over which direction to go and not take a step in any. I think we will have to have team research and it has to be inter-disciplinary and I think it is going to be an internal problem for a long time, until we get much more experienced in team teaching and inter-disciplinary

teaching. As I picture higher education today, unlike the traditional university style, the traditional pursuit, acquisition and dissemination of knowledge is more inter-dependent, and I believe that not too many people realize it, that it is a whole new approach that we should be doing and are not doing. Because you look at organizations of higher education, I'm including universities now, as well as college, and you look at the way a lot of people are still proceeding with research, just as you are on the individual basis.

I. Not the method of the future in your opinion?

R. I don't think so. I think there will still be a place for it, but I think the ones that will have impact will be a team inter-disciplinary research.

I. In your opinion are there some disciplines that can justify content research more than others?

R. No. If more justification takes place I think it is because of the people involved, not the discipline.

I. Aside from your special push at the moment for improved instructional procedures, are you aware of any content research being done now at your college?

R. Oh yes, now give me a preface again.

I. Well, not including the concentration say staff members have on adjusting to this individual study that I believe is for _____.

R. A teacher in French and German, linguistics, is working on a book, I can't recall the content. I know

that _____ is working on research on recreation in Canada. _____ is working on something in relation to the French writer that has just died, she wants to go over to France and get his personal letters. A lot of people that are on sabbaticals will be working on research of course, it will not necessarily be directly related to the individualization of instruction. I think we have nine of those people on sabbaticals and leaves of absence.

I. This one here may seem a bit redundant after what you have just said, but is any sort of provision being made by the college to support content research?

R. Yes, we have the sabbatical leave for outside and then of course we have budgets as you know for inside.

I. Who do you feel should make the decision on whether or not content research should be conducted at your college?

R. I would think that the decision is made when you become associated with the college, it is sort of like brushing your teeth. I would be disappointed if people didn't have a built-in bias for content research. As far as I'm concerned it is when you enter the college system, you have made that decision.

I. I would assume then that you would agree that if it doesn't involve a lot of additional time or money, that it could be handled at the department level with no trouble?

R. The only thing that you might have to get active

on in the management by exception, is that if it has implications for other departments, the results, or even the research itself, work involving other departments, then you must make provisions and start being actively involved so that they do become acquainted with what is being done in one department and get on the team, or get on the band wagon, or whatever you want to call it.

I. There is room for a little coordination in the effort then?

R. Right.

I. Do you feel that content research would interfere with the teaching function of the college?

R. Oh no, I think that it is beneficial to the teaching function of the college. That's one of the prime reasons for improving of instructing. I'm not necessarily talking about technique either.

I. The next question that I have then, even though you haven't said specifically, I think your answer has come through loud and clear, do you concur with the view that community colleges are primarily teaching institutions?

R. Oh yes, definitely. One of the historically, one of the biggest criticisms that can be leveled at community colleges and justly, rightly so, is that they are aping the senior institutes in too many cases.

I. How would you summarize the role of content research in this college? This can be either as it stands now, or as you see it in the years to come.

R. I'd say it is the continuing effort towards excellency in instruction.

I. The very last item that I make allowance for here is a catch-all open ended type of thing. Do you have any further comments which you feel would be relevant to a study of this nature?

R. Yes, I think that the Colleges Commission and the government had better set down priorities as to how much allocation to time, effort and resources will be devoted to various facets of the operation. One of which I think should be institutional and content research and I think that they should be on record to say that we will devote a portion of money and time in recognition of institutional and content research. And I don't think even universities have specified how much effort and money would go into research and how much effort will go into teaching. They just sort of lump it between undergraduate and graduate student.

I. They just function as they see fit at the time?

R. Yes, and I think we should come out and say you know X number, like industry does, a certain percentage of their profits will be devoted to, of course they have to keep competitive and improve their products and service, and I think we should do this too. And to my knowledge it hasn't been done. Not in a rational dedicated manner.

I. In fact, just as another aside, you would almost think that if the money squeeze does come on now, one of

the first things to go would be research money.

R. Oh that's what they keep telling me, I've heard also that the first thing to go would be counselling. I don't think you can economize by cutting off, you know you are not going to reduce your appetite by cutting off your arm. You might reduce the function but you don't eliminate the man.

I. Were there any other comments you would like to add?

R. No, I'll think of some a week from now, but that is too late.

B30015